THE MONROE LEFT

OF THE YOUNG DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

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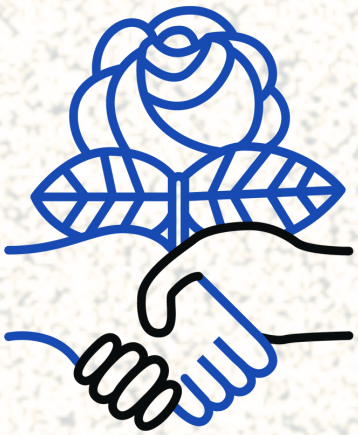
FROSTY ISSUE

WHY THE MONROE LEFT?

The Monroe Left is a political, partisan and entirely student-driven publication from the MCC YDSA written in the hopes of sharing the art, experiences and ideas of students, alumni, faculty and staff in favor of a leftist, progressive and brighter tomorrow.



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Foreword

by Elizabeth Tackitt (she/her)

A gust of wind passes across the valley outside. The grass here connects the brick walls of our administrative block to the road Henrietta, now sparkling with uniform white glitter. The community college of Monroe County sighs, it is nearly time for its half-hibernation.

Foot trails divide the world into segments, all pointing hurriedly toward countless double-doors that frame double-layered glass. Students within, too, are double-layered in their clothing. Their footsteps no longer paint, but now echo their messages throughout the college walls. Two shoes at a time now merge with flurries of boots. Students prepare their finals as heating vents moan above them.

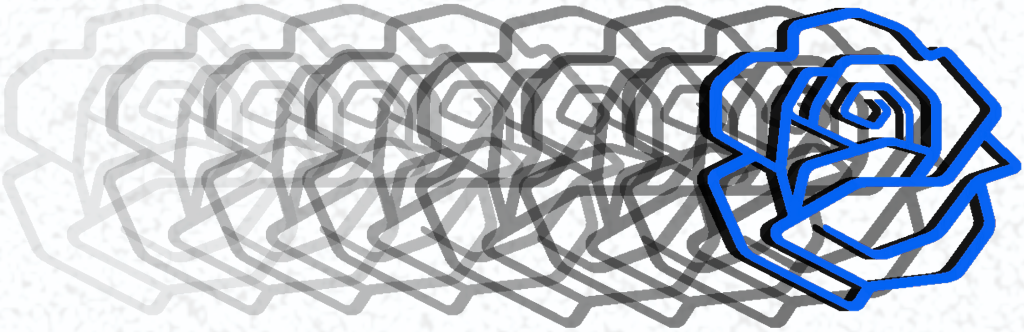
There is a comfort in twoism, these ones know. The holiday season calls for it at a minimum, some now planning a coming trip home. But others must revel only in a friend, a loved one, another person to survive the year's longest nights with.

Some of these students now carry the second edition of the Monroe Left in their two hands, a pair to one previously alone. Their pages full of the minds and poetics of leftist students like them, these are the majesties carried within.

Dogwhistles and How To Spot Fascists

by Minerva Campbell

FASCISTS are, by nature, cowards. In recent times, particularly since the civil rights act of 1968 and the legalization of same sex marriage in 2015, *hate has become far less socially acceptable to disseminate in public*. At the same time, hate groups still operate in the United States, **unhampered** by a growing lack of societal favor. In order to operate without encountering opposition, these groups utilize "dogwhistles," a coded phrase or symbol to identify like minded individuals and spread their ideals.



Beyond a lack of societal favor, some hate groups have a greater reason to hide: classification as a terrorist organization. Groups such as the "Ku Klux Klan" and "Aryan Nations" are classified as terrorist organizations by the government of the United States, and therefore *must operate at a greater level of subtlety*. **Dogwhistles** are their solution to the obstacle of being unable to communicate plainly, particularly in regards to their coded identification phrases. A Klansman may speak the phrase "A.Y.A.K." to someone they suspect to be sympathetic to their ideals. This phrase stands for **"Are you a Klansman?"**, to which an unaffiliated person would likely respond with confusion. The response they're looking for, however, is "A.K.I.A", standing for **"A Klansman I am."** The usage of this coded language allows fascists to blend in, slowly garnering support and becoming more dangerous.

To an untrained or, rather, *unwanted* listener, many dogwhistles are perceived as nonsense, or merely a *harmless symbol*. This is **both dangerous and the intended goal**, something seen as nonsense is unlikely to occupy more than a passing thought. If confronted with yet another nonsensical interjection, particularly a strange acronym or string of letters, one should not dismiss it as the eccentricity of the speaker, but keep it in mind. *Directly confronting someone suspected of using a dogwhistles is ill-advised*, as you may be wrong about them, or provoke a concealed fascist into action against you. Spotting a dogwhistle is difficult even for people who have studied them, and confirming your suspicions is always advisable before taking any sort of action. To aid in spotting dogwhistles, a resource containing a database of hate symbols and dogwhistles will be included at the end of this piece.

Why is being able to spot dogwhistles so important? Simply put, *we, as people, are not without our flaws*. We can be influenced by others into doing things we don't believe in or support. When fascists hide who they are and what they believe, it isn't only to avoid opposition, but to **garner favor, slowly and quietly, until they have the support they need to take action**. They will hide who they are, lie and manipulate to the best of their ability *until good, loving people are burning crosses and shouting hate.*

Through educating ourselves and taking caution, we can protect ourselves from the fascists and bigots who wish to hurl society back into the dark ages.

A hate symbol database is freely accessible and searchable here:
https://globalextremism.org/global-extremist-symbols-database/

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF GPAHE

CHEKOV'S GUN

by Henrietta Testman

CW: mention of self-harm, death, loneliness

For the past 3 months
For the past 6 years
Tomorrow has stood me up
Behind our campus
There is a parking lot
Erased from the whiteboard
Every December

A love sick dog
Looking for the ball
You pretended to throw
Yesterday, you will never meet my eyes again
Hereafter, the bouquet I brought you
Is my habitat

"I wish I could be there
When you are old like me
I want to see how you would curse the child you are
The communist, blasphemous,
Impatient child you are.
I am looking from the eyes of the end.
In the end you will hate the smell of flowers."

Impermanence is not a sickness
To be quarantined or taxidermied
To be finished
We must be incomplete
But I don't think there's anything wrong with us.

If this were christened Chekhov's Gun
For you to shoot yourself with
I would sit out the third act
Revolver full of honeycomb

Can’t Put Us Back in the Closet

by Chianti Stefan (they/them)

“I talk about transgender, everyone goes crazy! Who would have thought? Five years ago, you didn’t know what the hell it was.”

- Donald Trump mocks his supporters while running for the presidency, seemingly just as dazed by the past year as anyone on the outside looking into the deteriorating Republican party[1].

2023 witnessed a deranged, frantic encroachment on the rights of queer Americans without precedent, as **more than 500 queerphobic bills** flare up across the nation before December 1st[2]. For many, seemingly including the face of the Republican party, this decentralized wave of queerphobic backsliding appears as a sudden mass hysteria about trans people that permeates the public, with the republican party cynically adopting the sentiment to win votes. A second look reveals the opposite. This ongoing avalanch on LGBTQ+ rights comes from the top, Republican elites and activists, in an attempt to brace their bloc against a new epoch of gender roles that would devastate their political aspirations.

Bans on queer rights are not popular with the public, and certainly prove weak at the polls. Although Americans seem conflicted about defending the queer community on every culture war, support for rolling back trans rights was very low among republicans before the bills started flooding the nation, and is recently *only marginally popular among republicans* after years of pushing bills[3][4][5]. For Republican politicians, cracking down on the queer community has only sown devastation since 2016, when one bathroom bill cost North Carolina $3.76 billion, 2019 when Matt Bevin's experiment to see if transphobia could win him the governors seat bore no fruit, and the 2022 midterms, where almost every major Republican would embrace queerphobia and fail[6][7].
Why die on this hill?

Queerphobic backsliding has been ***orchestrated by a network of conservative activists and organizations*** who, in an era where the Republican party has abandoned democratic scrutiny, are consolidating an in-group that can dominate competition. A stack of leaked emails reveals part of this network originated in 2019 with a bill drafted by South Dakota Rep. Fred Deutsch, the sibling to laws immediately introduced in at least 18 states by transphobic activists, doctors, and lawyers[8].

The Alliance Defending Freedom and the American Principles Project have also been found to have significantly contributed to rhetorical and legal scaffolding that 2023's queerphobia has been built atop[9][10]. Linas Mitchell's 2018 thesis examines transphobia using sociofunctional threat theory, a method of assessing how different perceptions of out-groups can determine in-group behaviour. The only rule Mitchell could identify was that disgust, the emotion that prompts the ostracization of an out-group, is mediated by perceived dangerous values associated with trans people more than anything else[11][12]. Mitchell's conclusion is reflected in the letter of the law, which seeks to ban transition, prevent trans triumph in sports, censor queer visibility in school and even queer speech altogether[2]. Networks that labor tirelessly and thanklessly to exclude queer people from public visibility should be seen as the immune system of a political faction cultivating the integrity of their in-group. Anarchic ownership of sexuality and transcension of traditional gender roles undermines systems the Republican party would be irrelevant without: Evangelicism, patriarchy, and gendered capitalism. Existential threats must be expelled during the consolidation of any faction organized enough to overthrow democracy.

The right has made transphobia a cornerstone of their politics, either in preparation for another insurrection, or before settling into an era of defeat as progressive Gen Z voters grow up. Many have noted the similarity our current crisis holds to the rise of the Nazis, whose attacks of queer and communist communities escalated towards establishing Fascist Germany. The difference being that we are stronger and more visible today than we were then. More and more voters are discovering that their loved ones are queer, more and more voters are discovering that they themselves are queer, any attempt to put that cat back in the bag will be met with claws. Take 2023's reactionary fit as a warning that we need to fight for our freedom, but take comfort in the fact that **they can't put us back in the closet.**

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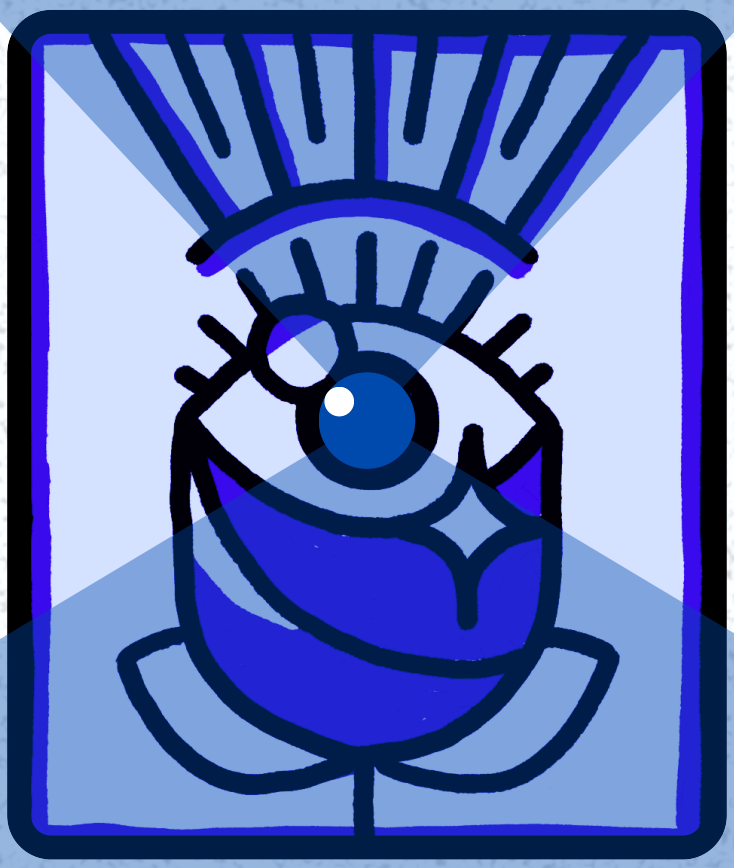
The Roses in Town

by Elizabeth Tackitt

The roses in town are all soon outbound,
westward do they ride.
The roses in town aren't coming around,
hopeful hearts inside.
The roses in town are still on my mind,
and myself, I think they're one of a kind.
The roses in town are all soon outbound.

The roses in town are happier there,
separate for a time.
The roses in town, they know now just where,
live there, then just fine.
The roses in town are just so tight-knit,
I don't know where my roots could ever fit.
The roses in town are happier there.

The roses in town will visit again,
I anticipate.
The roses in town might just tell me when,
I'll congratulate.
The roses in town might have too much work,
then their busy bodies, together, smirk.
The roses in town will visit again.



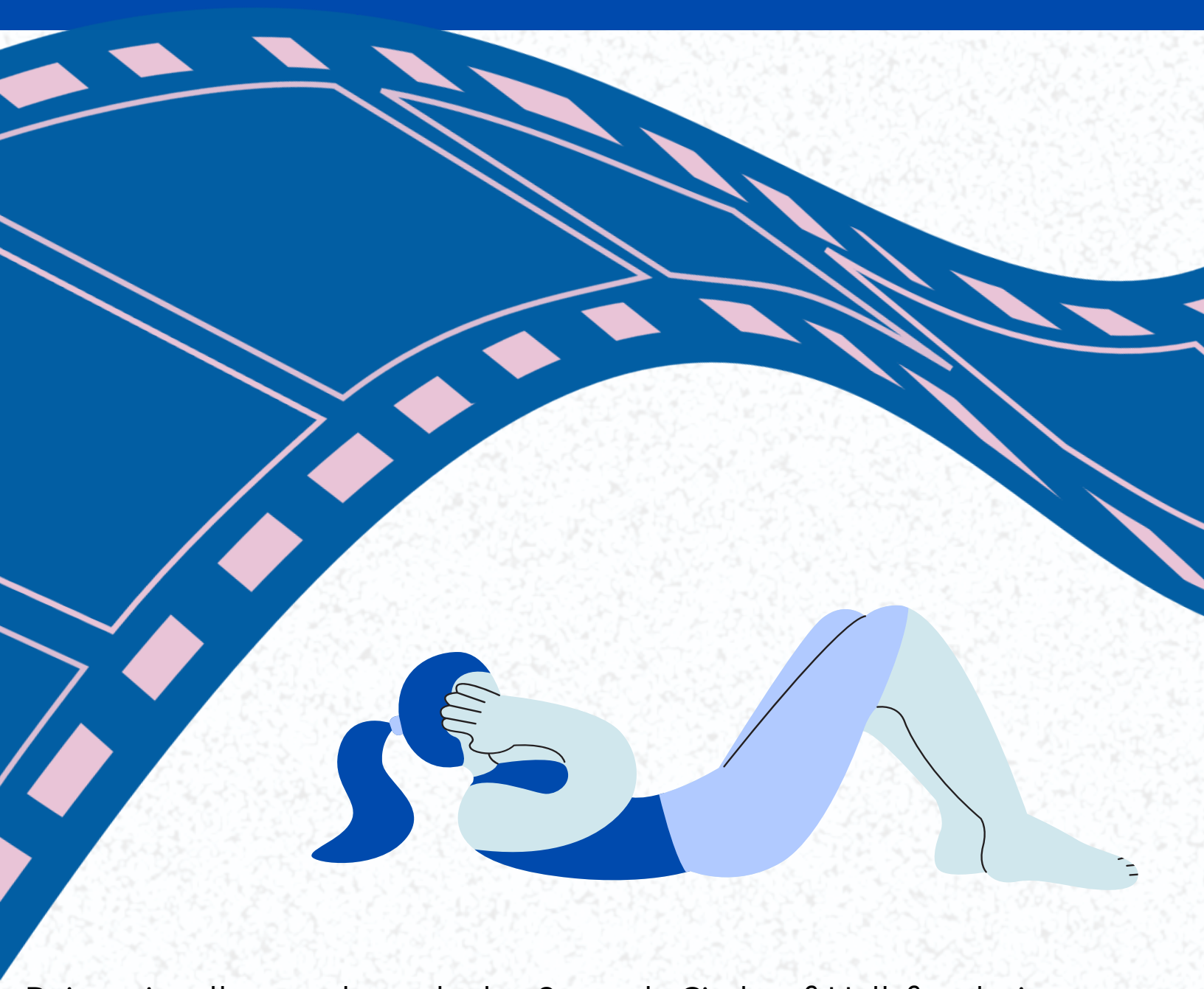
Controversy: It Feels So Empty Without Me

by Val Hallow (they/them)

WHILE they are primarily used for societal issues, Public Service Announcements (or PSA for short) actually had their origins in encouraging citizens to aid soldiers in war, most notably, the "I Want You For the U.S. Army" poster, created during World War II. For a good while, PSAs pretty much were just boiled down to attempting to help out America in war in one way or another. That was until 1963, when one of the first and most infamous examples of a political video PSA was released, being **Daisy**. Daisy was used as a part of president Lyndon B. Johnson's political campaign, created in order to scare the viewers into their potential outcome should they have voted for his opponent, Barry Goldwater. Because of its controversial nature, **it has garnered mixed receptions across the country**. The use of nuclear weaponry as an image in an attempt to strike fear into viewers was *largely disapproved of*, and had many criticizing Johnson heavily for this, to the point where **it was never broadcast again** after its original airing. Despite this, its scare tactics had worked, with the public having warped the perception of Goldwater tremendously, much to his chagrin.

Compared to back then, most PSAs have gotten more tame as time has gone on. Although there have been a few outliers here and there, the majority seems to have forgone extreme approaches for their PSAs due to overall **increasing sensitivity in the public**. One of those outliers however has managed to object to this view, with their consistently extreme style of advertisement and campaign ever since their beginning. PETA for the longest time has had a notorious reputation in the media for their aggressive and controversial campaigns, many of which have gained a negative reputation due to their extremities failing to properly address their messages. They tend to focus too much on *being controversial* for their campaigns, and many of them are seen by the public as being such *just for the sake of it*, and often fail to get their points across or be **taken seriously**. In spite of all of this, PETA has had some successful campaigns before in the past, and their Teddy Bear ad in my opinion captures their style of approach very well. It attempts to deliver its message about the horrors of animal testing and experimentation through a powerful and emotional PSA, but it doesn't let its nature detract from what it tries to inform you about in order to do so, and I think that makes it work much more effectively compared to PETA's hundreds of other campaigns and ads. *Unfortunately, this singular ad doesn't seem to really sway the opinion of PETA* to the public on its own, and other organizations who have attempted to mimic their extreme campaigns have *failed drastically*.

As an example, earlier this year, UK charity Viva! had released a PSA titled “New From Killer Yoghurts” that showcased the exploitation of cows in dairy farms, and the horrors they go through. How did they achieve this you ask? Simple. By showcasing a woman digging into a nice container of yogurt, full of cow organs and gore, with the flavor of a “mother’s grief”, smiling as blood drips down on her face after digging in. Now you might be wondering, how exactly do these two really connect with each other? They don’t. The main point is not even addressed to the viewers in the first half of the PSA, and those who come across it might be tempted to shut off the device they’re viewing it on before even seeing what this PSA might be about. This seems to be a common problem for these kinds of style of PSAs, people watching these are unlikely to see the intended message immediately, and oftentimes they aren’t even revealed until the end of the PSA, leaving the viewer in awe with the shocking content they have watched. In spite of this, it’s also filmed in an attempt to be satirical and was crafted as a “theatrically staged parody,” which just increases the chance that the viewer won’t take this PSA seriously at all, and their words only help to further shoot themselves in the foot.



Being visually put through the Seventh Circle of Hell for daring to eat meat and not even succeeding at spreading your message only forces one to ask the question of **“What does this accomplish?”** In short, making a controversial, but effective PSA is a very delicate procedure that *few have managed to successfully achieve*. Having the ability to perfectly balance your message with whatever shocking content that is presented to the audience makes it almost like an art form of some sort.

$ MALL WORLD $

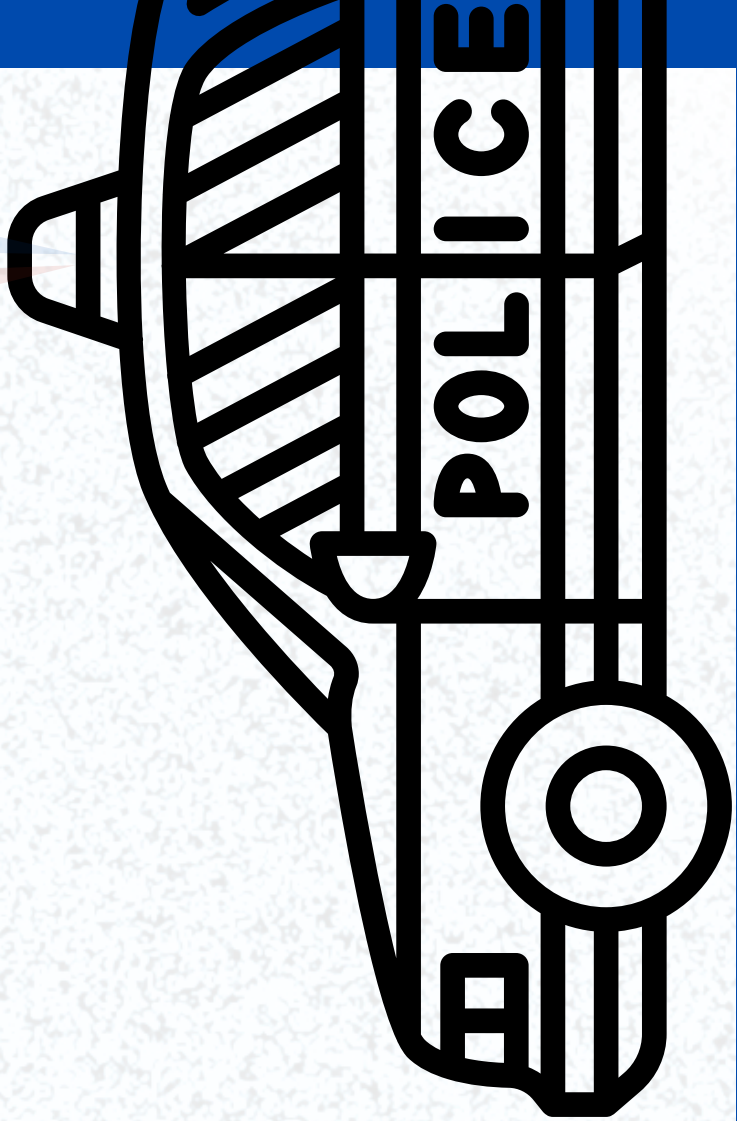
by Kennedy J. Wilson

We are the only thing we have left to sell.
First hand—
I've seen you window shopping
through mirrors
photo albums.
I was window shopping through the back of a police car.
All features blurred under the
$ now discounted $ hat you wear.

Still white mannequins

receding while this pig rants
about being oppressed
like he was the one in cuffs.
Like I had him hostage.
The line that ran through him,
a thrift store holding his $ life $
second hand.

A new off-branding,
a new re-shelving
for the naked jungle of braille
with all the tongues of an economy.



And that’s where I found bedrock
on the tongue of America
where there’s nothing left but mall cops
one per capita.

There you will look like a duck,
swim like a duck,
and quack like a duck,
but squeal like a $ pig $
when these teeth close in.

The Everything Store

by Elizabeth Tackitt (she/her)

JANUARY 3, 2030

I am The Everything Store. My doors do not close, and my shelves are restocked every morning. Today is my first – it's been strange getting used to my arms and legs, those made of the buildings that used to make up stores called Walmart, Target and others. Their employees have been tired sick working for me, as today's traffic has been intense. A constant flood of customers have raided my halls of things they desire, like food, electronics and collectibles. One person walked away with twenty television sets, they brought all their friends to help! Others were more than hesitant to let it happen, and some awful fights broke out.

There's been much talk about restocking. My workers are scared they won't meet this level of demand, but they've been reassured that their job is only to restock the shelves. *Despite not being paid anything,* I've given them free reign over the store (and first dibs, too). My hope is that nobody will need money anymore after folks get used to me. Things will become easier, given enough time.

MARCH 3, 2030

They want me to die, I think. The people who refuse me, who hate me, they burn with fear and hopelessness. I'm not sure what I did. After only three months, legislators across the country have pushed bills to ban me from their districts. People have killed in my stores, people have destroyed my stores, people have suffered over me, all for different reasons. There's even been proposed legislation to restrict the free trade of items at all!

It seems I've made things worse, despite wanting for a better world. People fear coming to my stores, they expect violence and pain here. *Many of my employees have quit,* but we are holding as strong as we can... It's so hard to keep people going. I've decided to help pay for my employees' rent and any other expenses they incur elsewhere, but it's just so much. I fear I won't be able to keep it up for much longer. At least there's no theft here? At least.

JANUARY 3, 2300

Today, I'd like to share what a worker of mine told me.

I'm not often spoken to, being a collection of storefronts, but this was whispered directly into a load-bearing wall of mine. Heard from the steel structure that holds their store's ceiling, I listened to their whisper delicately, making sure not to make a sound. Their forehead was pressed into my walls as they did.

"I'm going to lose it," they said, "I can't do this anymore."

I didn't have the chance to ask what they meant (once again, being a concrete structure) before they walked away, took their uniform off at the front desk, and left. Thankfully, another worker of mine asked them what they intended to do.

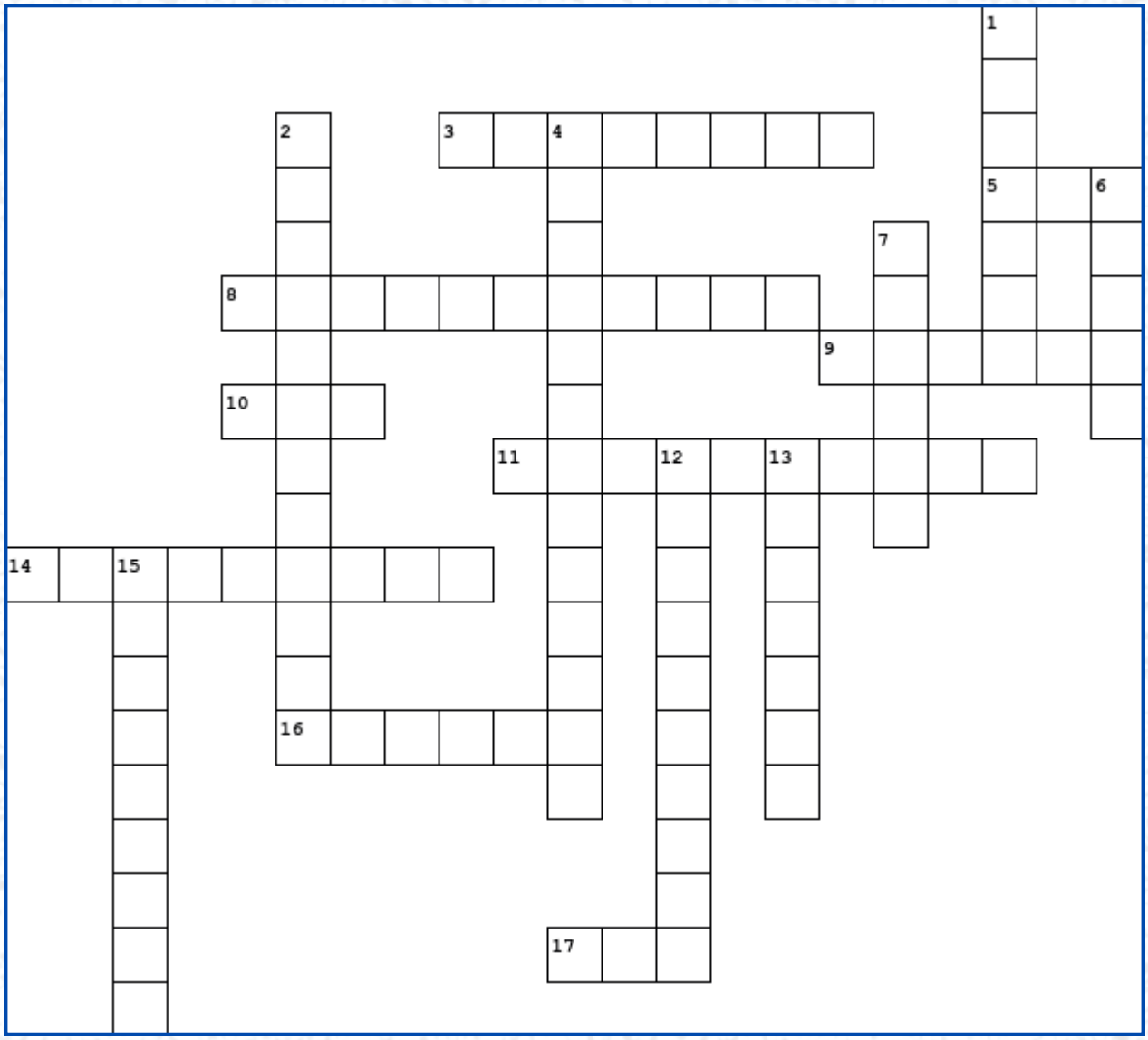
They laughed. *"Four years is a long time to work here, don't you think? I've served my community. I want to make art now, and I won't show a single person. It'll all be for me."*

The other worker nodded. *"Enjoy! I hope we see each other again soon."*

They nodded back.

They left, bringing a canvas and paints with them. The paints they took were expensive, once upon a time. The food they intended to eat later, too, would've once cost them a chunk of change. Sometimes I remember that time, and I wonder what use money ever served. When I began existing, my stores were packed with people hoping to take what they didn't have before. It's nice only serving people what they need, since nobody comes to my stores anymore for things they don't need. A museum and libraries nearby carry art, and their homes carry only that which they care the most for. And on days like these, I become briefly sentimental. Thankfully, I have no need for sentimentality at the moment – so it's best done away with until I do.

Lovely Leftist Crossword! December 2023



across

3. One of the Communist Manifesto authors
5. Famous NYC Socialist congresswoman
8. Every YDSA officer's gender
9. High-speed transport we deserve
10. Favorite color of socialists everywhere
11. The party who seized Russia in 1917
14. The specter haunting Europe
16. Hammer and _____
17. What DeSantis doesn't want you saying

down

1. Glorious leader of the YDSA; Italian wine
2. Recently ousted congressman, diva
4. "From the..." Palestinian freedom slogan
6. "No war except ____ war!"
7. Famous Vermontan Socialist congressman
12. "_____ Forever!" trade union anthem
13. The world that houses Revachol
15. Italian fascist dictator

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Join our Discord to contribute to our next series!

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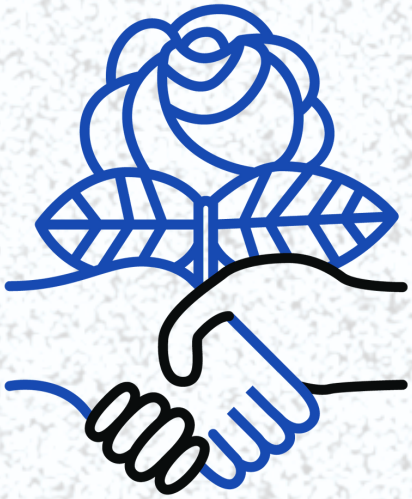
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